

September 1, 2005

**MEMORANDUM**

**To:** Dr. Vermelle J. Johnson, Chairman, and Members, Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing

**From:** Dr. Gail M. Morrison, Director of Academic Affairs and Licensing

**Consideration of**  
**Improving Teacher Quality Competitive Grants Awards,**  
**Project Year 2005-06**

**Background**

Since 1984, the Commission on Higher Education has been responsible for administering federal funds under a Title II program of *The Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA)*. In 2001, the federal legislation was re-authorized under *The No Child Left Behind Act*. Title II Part A *Preparing, Training, and Recruiting High-Quality Teachers and Principals* authorizes the Commission to conduct a competitive awards program. The purpose of this part of the federal legislation is to provide support to:

increase student academic achievement through strategies such as improving teacher and principal quality and increasing the number of highly qualified teachers in the classroom and highly qualified principals and assistant principals in schools.

The Commission is authorized to provide a competitive grants program to eligible partnerships. Several years ago, the Commission authorized the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing to make awards on its behalf.

The partnership must be comprised, at a minimum, of schools of education and arts and sciences from higher education institutions along with one or more high-poverty local education agencies (LEA; defined as school districts).

Additional partners may be included as defined by the legislation. Funds to the state are allocated based on the FY 2001 amount received under the former *Eisenhower Professional Development* and *Class-Size Reduction* programs. Any remaining funds from the federal appropriation are distributed through a formula based on the State's school-age population and the percent of these children in families with incomes below the poverty level.

The *Guidelines* approved by the Commission were developed to reflect the new legislation and have been developed in collaboration with the S.C. Department of Education. Federal regulations require that the Commission work in conjunction with the Department in meeting statewide educational needs. The priority areas that proposals must address derive from the federal legislation as well as those identified in the State's Consolidated State Plan submitted to the U.S. Department of Education.

Under this program, grants may be awarded for multi-year projects. Multi-year projects previously approved total \$921,492. Carry forward funds from a prior grant year will be used to fund those grants through January 3, 2006.

Under federal regulations, 2.5 percent of the *Improving Teacher Quality Higher Education Grants* (ITQ) funds for the state are allocated to the Commission to be used for the competitive grants program. The Commission has approximately \$900,000 in new funds with which to make awards for the project year 2005-06. Proposed projects may request up to \$125,000 in funds per year. Average budget requests range from \$50,000 to \$125,000. The Commission seeks proposals that will have maximum impact, and it encourages multi-year programs to assure positive results on the target audience. The number of grants awarded is determined primarily by the quality of the proposals submitted and the size of the negotiated final budgets in comparison to the total funds available. Equitable geographic distribution (i.e., districts served) must be considered in making awards, assuming proposals are deemed to be of high quality. No proposal is considered unless it meets the minimum federal definition of a partnership (as stated in the *ITQ Guidelines* and in the *Federal Title II Non-Regulatory Guidance*).

A listing of the new proposals submitted is included as **Attachment 1**.

The Review Panel consisting of K-12 and higher education representatives (**Attachment 2**) met on July 22, 2005, to review and rate the proposals submitted for consideration. Abstracts describing all of the proposed new projects are included in **Attachment 3**. Seven proposals were received by the Commission for consideration; however, two proposals did not strictly adhere to the Federal

description of an eligible partnership, so they were not considered by the Review Panel but will be invited to resubmit after making appropriate adjustments.

Members of the Review Panel expressed concern about the quality of the proposals, particularly as they relate to *No Child Left Behind's* vision. The panelists also noted that many of the proposals contained inadequate evaluation plans related to student achievement. The panel agreed that Commission staff should re-issue a supplemental Request for Proposals to the remaining six institutions, with revised proposals due October 1, 2005. Institutions intending to resubmit revised proposals should pay particular attention to the importance of LEA involvement, student achievement, and the presentation to the review panel.

The members of the Review Panel made recommendations for programmatic and budgetary changes for each of the projects. The Review Panel made several general comments regarding the quality of the proposals that the staff will use in future outreach activities with the institutions concerning the program. Many of the proposals received low ratings because of the weak quality of the proposed partnership, a marginal evaluation plan, or a failure to document how the proposal will enhance student achievement. Several proposals were cited as having very weak evaluation plans as required by the *Guidelines*. The federal legislation directly links teacher quality to student achievement, yet few of the proposals evaluated the projects' activities in relation to student achievement.

The Review Panel recommended that Francis Marion University's proposal "Improving Teacher Quality" receive funding, providing the following changes are made: 1) the project must involve content area experts in classroom activity; 2) staff development must extend beyond the first 24 teachers in the program; 3) the Project Director must clarify content expectations for the development of units; 4) the Project Director must identify weaknesses in current curriculum for meeting standards; 5) the project must expand assessment to address more fully student achievement; 6) the Project Director must clarify exactly how many units will be developed; and 7) the project must describe how assessments will be built into units and shared with district teachers. The panel expects these issues to be addressed in writing to CHE staff by October 1, 2005, prior to the transmission of any funds.

### **Recommendation**

The staff recommends that the Committee on Academic Affairs and Licensing approve on behalf of the Commission the Review Panel's funding recommendations as depicted in **Attachment 1** with \$124,848 awarded to Francis Marion for year 1 of a four-year project. In keeping with the procedure from previous years, the staff requests the authority to negotiate the final program

activities and budgets with the Project Director (as per the recommendations of the Review Panel). Funding will be contingent upon the Project Director's revision of the proposed project to meet the Review Panel's recommended changes.

## Appendix I

### New Proposed *Improving Teacher Quality* Grant Proposals and Funding Recommendation Project Year 2004-05

Institution	Project Title	Director	Funds requested	Recommended for Funding
Francis Marion University	Improving Teacher Quality	Tammy Powlowski	\$124,848 (Year 1 of 4)	Yes
Lander University	Using Technology & Instructional Connections To Develop High-Quality Learning Communications	Pamela Wash	\$125,000	No
USC-Upstate	Integration of Geographic Integration System & Global Positioning System Technologies into the Middle Grades II	Judy Beck	\$50, 269	No
Coker College	Coker College Professional Development Collaborative	Edward Ebert	\$75,283	No
USC-Columbia	Developing Highly Qualified Middle School Teachers of Mathematics	Laura Kent	\$123,805	No

Note: Seven proposals were received by the Commission for consideration; however, two proposals were not reviewed because they did not strictly adhere to the Federal description of eligible Partners.

## Attachment 2

### **Improving Teacher Quality Review Panel FY 2005-06**

Jeffrey Priest, Head School of Education University of South Carolina- Aiken	Randy La Cross, Director Center of Excellence Governor's School for Science And Mathematics
Kitty Farnell, Coordinator Science Education Lexington/Richland District Five	Leonard McIntyre, Dean College of Education, Humanities and Social Science South Carolina State University
Rae McPherson, Program Manager S.C. Commission on Higher Education	Michael Raley Program Manager S.C. Commission on Higher Education
Catherine Samulski Education Associate S.C. Department of Education	Esther Kramer Program Manager S. C. Commission on Higher Education

**Abstract of Proposals**

**“Developing Highly Qualified Middle School Teachers of Mathematics”**

**University of South Carolina - Columbia**

**Project Director: Laura Brinker Kent**

This project will prepare identified middle school teachers in Richland County School District One to achieve “highly qualified” status in middle level mathematical. These teachers will have the opportunity to improve their content knowledge and enhance their overall instructional practices through a graduate level course focused on teaching middle and high school mathematics topics using various manipulatives and on-site support for enactment of a new curriculum materials. It is expected that their participation in these activities will prepare them to take and pass the Middle Level Mathematics PRAXIS II in the 2005-06 academic year.

The manipulatives course, offered through the University of South Carolina graduate program in education, designed to cover a broad spectrum of 7-12 content as recommended by National Council of Teachers of Mathematics Standards documents (2000) and South Carolina Mathematics Standards (2001). Developmentally appropriate tools to enhance teaching of number, algebra, geometry, measurement, data analysis and probability are introduced along with activities to help teachers gain a better understanding of the underlying content. Since the course is offered through video tape, it also provides flexibility for teachers to complete the work at their own pace and try out with their students as they increase their comfort level with the content.

Additional professional development sessions, conducted at participating schools and with small groups of teachers will support enactment of SpringBoard mathematics units, new supplementary curriculum materials adopted by Richland One. Many of these units include the use of manipulative materials similar to the ones used in the manipulatives course. The SpringBoard units will provide the opportunity for teachers to enact manipulatives in contextualized and extended problem solving situations.

The premises of the professional development sessions are that teachers are reflective practitioners and that all middle school students are capable of success in mathematics, particularly when various instructional strategies, such as

collaborative groups are utilized and individual students' thinking is valued and validated (Campbell & White, 1997). University faculty and researchers from the mathematics department and education, as well as highly qualified middle school and high school mathematics teachers will lead the professional development sessions. These sessions will be focused on content, pedagogy, and student work. In addition, the project directors will provide support through observations and demonstrations.

The combination of graduate course work and on-site support will serve as a model for simultaneous professional development related to instructional practice and enhancement of teachers' content knowledge. Participating teachers will be encouraged to further their professional development by sharing their work and experiences with other mathematics teachers across the state, region, and nation, at various related conferences. The directors will also lead efforts to disseminate ideas and outcomes through various state and national mathematics journals



## **“Integration of Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positions System (GPS) Technologies into the Middle Grades II”**

**University of South Carolina – Upstate**

**Project Director: Judy Beck**

This project is aimed at training teachers in the effective use of new technologies, namely Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology.

The project goals are to:

- Develop the knowledge and skills of participating teachers in the utilization of GPS and GIS technologies.
- Enhance the content knowledge of participating teachers in the areas of math, science, and social studies through the use of GIS and GPS technology.
- Provide middle level students (grades 5-8) in high-need schools with quality instruction through teacher created units integrating GPS and GIS technologies.
- Provide on-going support to assist teacher participants with implementation of GIS and GPS technology and accompanying subject matter in their classrooms.

The project consists of the following components:

- Professional development workshops during the summer and academic year to increase knowledge and skills related to Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technology.
- Creation of collaborative lesson/unit plans integrating Geographic Information Systems (GIS) and Global Positioning Systems (GPS) technologies.
- Action research project including videotaping of lesson and reflection by teacher to improve teaching and student learning.
- On-going support throughout academic year.

**“Using Technology and Instructional Connections to Develop High-Quality Learning Communities”**

**Lander University**

**Project Director: Pamela Wash**

“Using Technology and Instructional Connections to Develop High-Quality Learning Communities” is a comprehensive, long-term systemic professional development project designed to build and expand learning communities within and among districts with the overall goals of effecting systemic pedagogical reform, providing sustained professional development in core subject areas to strengthen the knowledge and practice of teachers, and to strengthen the implementation of technology to enhance instruction and communication. During the first year of implementation 2005-2006, administrators, faculty, teachers, and paraprofessionals from Laurens School District 55, an established PDS site from Greenwood 50, and Lander University will unite to organize and establish the following professional development initiatives that will be ongoing and sustained over a five year grant period: Study Groups, Connection Retreats, Communication Listserv “E-Zing”, Ongoing Subject Area Workshops, Addressing Certification Needs, An Annual Saturday Mini-Conference, and Technology Training.

## **“Coker College Professional Development Collaboration (PDC)”**

**Coker College**

**Project Director: Edward Ebert**

Coker College proposes to establish a Professional Development Collaborative (PDC) in conjunction with the Darlington County School District and with the involvement of college faculty in Arts and Sciences and the South Carolina Montessori Alliance. The purpose of this program is to significantly improve the effectiveness of the student teaching experience for our teacher candidates, cooperating classroom teachers, and the student populations they serve. Our intention is to develop a cadre of cooperating teachers who will be provided orientation, instruction, and support that complements the preparation of our pre-service teachers. This new model makes the advantages of a PDS possible for institutions which, for a variety of reasons, may find the PDS model problematic.

**The Need:** The unique nature of Coker College as a private, liberal arts college in a rural region of South Carolina, and of the population that it serves, makes the PDS model unworkable for meeting our needs. Our student teachers are placed in schools across a broad geographic area and in a number of counties. A single PDS site cannot accommodate the geographic distribution of our student teachers, and multiple sites are beyond the resources of our institution. The PDC addresses those obstacles.

**The Rationale:** We have found that the student teaching experience is often less than optimal due to differing expectations of the student teacher and the cooperating teacher, and because the two are not sharing a common pedagogical perspective. This program will provide instruction that enables the cooperating teacher to appreciate the pedagogical preparation that the student teacher brings to the experience. This will also provide the cooperating teacher with exposure to current educational theory. As a result, the classroom students will benefit from the coordinated interaction of a veteran teacher and a highly-qualified pre-service teacher.

**The Program in Brief:** An cohort of classroom teachers will be identified in collaboration with the LEA. Additional teachers will be added to the program each year. Teachers and student teachers attend an orientation program on the Coker campus at the beginning of the fall semester. During the semester, the full-time teaching responsibilities of our student teachers will be arranged with a common one-week overlapping period during which the cooperating teachers will attend workshops on the Coker College campus. Sessions will provide teachers

with experiences that parallel those that Coker students have completed as part of their professional education. Included will be methodology for science, math, language arts, social studies, and Montessori-based principles for early childhood education. Participating schools will provide substitute teachers during this time likely using No Child Left Behind funds. Teachers will return to their classes with a better understanding of the skills and techniques that the Coker students have obtained, and will be mentors for teachers working with student teachers. Coker students will benefit from greater cooperation and support for implementing what they have learned. Students in classes benefit from a more coordinated effort between the teacher and the student-teacher.

## **“Improving Teacher Quality”**

**Francis Marion**

**Project Director: Tammy Powlowski**

The Pee Dee Region of South Carolina encompasses some of the state’s most at-risk children. For the 18 districts in the region, the median poverty index is 78.9%, while statewide it is 65.7%. The extent of poverty in this region is so great that it impacts negatively on student achievement. This high concentration of poverty in a single geographic area provides both a challenge and an opportunity. Located near the geographic center of the Pee Dee region, Francis Marion University (FMU) has demonstrated its willingness to face that challenge and use it as an opportunity to focus the combined resources of the university and its partners. In 2004, FMU established a Center of Excellence to Prepare Teachers of Children of Poverty (The Center). Through a combination of resources from The Center, the College of Liberal Arts and three local school districts (Marion 2, Dillon 2 and Marion 7), the proposed project would meet newly discovered needs of the children of poverty.

On-going discussions with school personnel revealed a growing realization that teachers should align their own classroom instruction and assessments to newly adopted SC curriculum standards. This led to an awareness of the need to develop high quality instructional units of study in response to these standards. This project would draw together 24 teachers (three from each grade level, grades one through eight) from the partner schools to participate in 13 weekends of intensive immersion in curriculum development over a period of seven months. The purpose of the immersion sessions is to learn the conceptual framework for developing high quality instructional units, which are standards-based and highly effective for teaching children of poverty. These units would align with the new state standards and offer a unique approach of study using Bloom’s Taxonomy. The sessions would be led by FMU consultant faculty under the guidance of Dr. Lorin Anderson, an educator and psychologist who was a student of Benjamin Bloom.

Upon completion, each curriculum unit will be field tested in the partner school districts and revised as a part of an ongoing process of development. Teachers will communicate with peers and consultant faculty to refine instructional units, keep journals to determine impact on teaching and learning, and do self-assessments to document changes in teacher practice and student achievement. This project will impact change and have a profound influence on classroom and school practices.

The proposed project will be managed with a commitment to a Continuous Improvement Process. Project components will be constantly monitored and modifications will be considered on the basis of data-driven decisions. Any program component not meeting its objectives will be given top priority for possible modifications. All quantitative and qualitative project data will be available to other groups wishing to implement similar projects. Completed units will be put on CDs and disseminated in the Pee Dee Region by the Center and ultimately throughout the state by the South Carolina Department of Education.